

# “BRAZIL IS NOT TRAVELING ENOUGH”: ON POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND ANALOGOUS COUNTER-CURRENTS

*an interview with Ella Shohat and Robert Stam  
by Emanuelle Santos and Patricia Schor*

It was our pleasure to interview Professors Ella Shohat and Robert Stam from New York University during their visit to the Netherlands to join two events hosted by the Postcolonial Initiative and the Centre for the Humanities of Utrecht University. In this interview they touch on points of critical importance to reflect on the themes developed throughout the current issue of **P: Portuguese Cultural Studies**.

**ES/PS: One of the points of departure in the Postcolonial field in Portuguese has been either “we want to get out of” or “we want to offer something different from” the Anglo- Postcolonial theory. What do you say about that?**

**Shohat:** We will be happy to discuss this terminology, because I think we find it problematic. First of all, we think Lusophone and Brazilian Studies should offer something different from Anglophone Postcolonial theory! Our critique of certain aspects of Postcolonial Studies is part of our new book<sup>1</sup>, and I think it is important because we believe that some of the occasional rejection of Postcolonial Studies in France and Brazil has to do with the projection of Postcolonial Studies as “Anglo-Saxon” as opposed to “Latin.” So various intellectual projects which are actually quite transnational, such as Postcolonial theory, Critical Race Studies, Multicultural Studies, and even Feminist Studies get caught up in that old regional dichotomy – ultimately a kind of construct, even a phantasm – that sees ideas as ethnically marked as “Latin” or “Anglo-Saxon.” We argue in the book that both terms are

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<sup>1</sup> Stam, Robert, and Ella Shohat. *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Print.

misnomers, that “Latin” America is also indigenous and African and Asian, just as supposedly “Anglo-Saxon” America is also indigenous, African, and Asian. The project of our book is to go beyond ethnically defined nation-states to a relational, transnational view of nations as palimpsestic and multiple.

**Stam:** For us, all the Americas, despite imperial hegemonies, also have much in common, in both negative ways (conquest, indigenous dispossession, transAtlantic slavery) and positive ways (artistic syncretism, social pluralism) and so forth. In his memoir, *Verdade Tropical*<sup>2</sup>, Caetano Veloso says that like Brazil, the US is *fatalmente mestiço* – inevitably mestizo – but chooses, out of racism, not to admit it. The right-wing’s virulent hatred of Obama, in this sense, betrays a fear of this mestizo character of the American nation.

**Shohat:** It is no coincidence that the relationship between African American and other Afro-diasporas around the Americas has been quite strong. Such collaborations make no sense within an “Anglo-Saxon” versus “Latin” dichotomy. We propose in the book that the word “Anglo-Saxon” – which designates two extinct German tribes that moved to England more than a millennium ago – be retired in favor of the word “Anglo-Saxonist” as a synonym for racism. Almost all the writers who prattled about “Anglo-Saxon” values – Mitt Romney is the latest to trumpet this heritage – were white supremacists and exterminationist racists. We see the Latin versus Anglo dichotomy as a symptom of what we call “intercolonial narcissism.” Thus we need another vocabulary and grammar.

**Stam:** It is about two versions of Eurocentrism, the Northern European version and the South European version of European superiority, Anglo-Saxonism and a *Latinité* that originated, as [Walter] Mignolo and others have pointed out, in French interventions in Mexico. Although the Southern European version was subsequently subalternized, in the beginning the British and North Americans actually envied Portugal and Spain for their empires, because they were rich thanks to South American mineral wealth, which North America did not have. It is interesting about Hipólito da Costa, who was a Portuguese/Brazilian diplomat who went to Washington around the time of the American Revolution and

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<sup>2</sup> Veloso, Caetano. *Verdade Tropical*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997. Print.

reported that: “the people are so poor, and they marry indians,” all traits that are usually associated more with Brazil.

Of course, much of the resistance to these academic currents comes from legitimate resentment about the inordinate power of the Anglophone academe. This power, and the privileging of the English language, is historically rooted in the power of the British Empire (*Pax Britannica*), and of the US as the heir of that Empire (*Pax Americana*). As Mário de Andrade pointed out long ago, the cultural power of a nation is in some ways correlated with the power of its armies and its currency.

One of the points of our new book is to question the international division of intellectual labor, the system which exalts the thinkers of the Global North over the thinkers of the Global South, that sees Henry James as “naturally” more important than Machado de Assis, Fredric Jameson as more important than Roberto Schwarz, Jacques Rancière as more important than Marilena Chaui or Ismail Xavier, and Sinatra as more important than Jobim. Another instance of this hierarchy is that concepts like “hybridity” are attributed to Harvard professor Homi Bhabha, when Latin American intellectuals were talking about hybridity – what was “Anthropophagy” all about? – at least a half century earlier. In any case, we are less interested in gurus and *maîtres à penser* than in the transnational circuitries of discourse. That is why we suggest that postcolonial theorists look beyond the British and French empires look at Latin America, look at Afro-America, look at the Francophone thinkers, look at indigenous peoples in Europe, African Americans in France, all the criss-crossing diasporic intellectuals.

**Shohat:** Latin American intellectuals have been in the forefront of doing *mestiçage*, *métissage*, Anthropophagy. While we certainly consider ourselves as part of Postcolonial theory, we have also critiqued certain of its aspects, for example the ahistorical, uncritical celebration of hybridity discourse. We were asking: “What are the genealogies of such discourses?” We prefer to emphasize the question of “linked analogies” between and across national borders. So for us, cross-border analysis becomes really crucial. It is not reducible to nation-state formations.

**Stam:** On the contrary, we argue in the new book that the nation-state can be seen as highly problematic if we adapt an indigenous perspective, since native nations were not states, were victimized by Europeanized nation-states, and were sometimes philosophically opposed, as Pierre Clastres points out, to the very concept of nation-states and societies based on coercion. That was what the Brazilian modernists praised about them, that they had no police, armies, or puritanism.

**Shohat:** We also have a critique of Postcolonial theory, going back to my old essay<sup>3</sup> that entails posing the question “When does the postcolonial begin?” from an indigenous perspective. Indigenous thinkers often see their situation as colonial rather than postcolonial, or as both at the same time. While a certain Postcolonial theory celebrates cosmopolitanism, indigenous discourse often valorizes a *rooted* existence rather than a cosmopolitan one. While Postcolonial and Cultural Studies revels in the “blurring of borders,” indigenous communities often seek to *affirm* borders by demarcating land, as we see in the Amazon, against encroaching squatters, miners, nation-states, and transnational corporations.

**Stam:** While the poststructuralism that helped shape postcolonialism emphasizes the inventedness of nations and “denaturalizes the natural,” indigenous thinkers have insisted on love of a land regarded as “sacred,” another word hardly valued in the post- discourses. While Postcolonial theory, in a Derridean vein, militants against “originary” thinking ..., threatened native groups want to recover an original culture partially destroyed by conquest and colonialism. What Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls indigenous “multinaturalism” challenges not only the rhetorical antinaturalism of the “posts” but also what might be called the primordial Orientalism, that which separated nature from culture, animals from human beings.

**Shohat:** While the beginnings of Postcolonial Studies are usually traced back to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*<sup>4</sup> and tend to emphasize the great European empires of the XIX century, and to a lesser extent the American neo-empire of the XX

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<sup>3</sup> Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the "Post-Colonial"." *Social Text*. 31/32: Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992): 99-113. Print.

<sup>4</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Print.

century, we prefer to forward the American imperialism, but also go back to 1492, which is why our early book *Unthinking Eurocentrism*<sup>5</sup> in 1992, had a whole chapter on 1492. Already in *Unthinking* we were arguing for looking into the links between the various 1492s, that of the Inquisition, the expulsion of the Moors, the “discovery” i.e. the conquest of the Americas, and the beginnings of TransAtlantic slavery, first of indians and then of Africans. The discourses about Jews and Muslims, such as the *limpieza de sangre*, which was a part of the *Reconquista* discourse, actually traveled to the Americas and then were deployed already with Columbus about the indigenous people, where the anti-Semitic “blood libel” discourse was transformed into an anti-cannibalist discourse. Just as Jews and Muslims were diabolized in Europe, in the Americas the African Exu was diabolized, as was the indigenous Tupi figure Tupã.

**Shohat:** The point is that we can no longer segregate all the issues of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-black racism, the massacres of indigenous people. Conventionally, the Inquisition against Jews is seen as leading to the Holocaust. But the Inquisition and the expulsion of the Moors, the conquest, also lead to the repression of African and indigenous religions.

**Stam:** A wonderful sequence in Glauber Rocha’s *Terra em Transe*<sup>6</sup> dramatizes what Ella just said. The scene satirically restages Cabral’s *Primeira Missa* with the Porfirio Diaz character as a right-wing *golpista*. Cabral/Diaz raises the chalice, we hear the music of *candomblé*. This is very profound and suggestive. In a return of the repressed, Rocha superimposes an image of the Catholic Mass over African religious music. We are all aware of the Spanish Inquisition, but we often forget that European conquest and colonialism also carried out a kind of Inquisition against African and indigenous religions. It is also interesting that the famous skeleton of “Luzia” discovered in Brazil was described as having “Negroid features.” Glauber Rocha felt all this intuitively. By putting *candomblé* music as Cabral/Diaz is raising the *cálice* – we are reminded of Chico [Buarque]’s *afaste de mim este cálice*<sup>7</sup>– Rocha evokes all these historical/cultural contradictions. We call this “trance-Brechtianism.” He uses *candomblé* trance

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<sup>5</sup> Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

<sup>6</sup> *Terra Em Transe*. Dir. Rocha, Glauber. 1967. Film.

<sup>7</sup> Buarque, Chico, and Gilberto Gil. “Cálice.” *Feijoada Completa*. Philips, 1978. LP.

music possession to go beyond Bertold Brecht. It is not just class against class, but culture against culture. It is Africa, Europe, indigenous, all at the same time.

One of the things we stress in the book is the immense aesthetic contribution of Latin American artists, with their endless invention: Anthropophagy, Magic Realism, aesthetics of hunger, *Tropicália*, the Afro-Brazilian manifesto *Dogma Feijoada*. Many of the alternative aesthetics from Latin America are based on anti-colonial inversions. *Tropicália* turns upside down the hostility to the Tropics as “primitive.” *Antropofagia* valorized the rebellious cannibal. Magic Realism exalted magic over western science. We think Postcolonial theory could learn from this kind of audacity and profound rethinking of cultural values.

**Shohat:** Because I think that what we would be worried about is precisely any kind of meta-diffusionist narrative that sees Postcolonial Study as exclusively Anglo-Saxon, or even an Anglophone thing that travels to, let us say, Brazil. Just to take another perspective, it is not that there is nothing that the postcolonial can teach us as a method of reading, a method of analyzing, but we should see it as a potentially polycentric and open-ended discourse to be defined from multiple sites and perspectives. Our key argument about the multi-directionalities of ideas is that the Postcolonial project and similar projects emerge out of many, many contexts. There are so many antecedents alongside the usual postcolonial triad of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Important as they are, we have to remember figures like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire.

In our book, we speak about the “seismic shift” that attempted to decolonize institutional and academic culture. World War II, Nazism, fascism, the Holocaust, decolonization, minority movements, all that triggered a crisis in the western faith in the promises of modernity and progress. All that converged to make the West doubt itself. The self-image of the West and the white world was being questioned. As a result you find radical challenges within the academic disciplines: Dependency Theory in economics, where Latin American thinkers played a key role; Third Worldist and later Postcolonial theory in

Literature; Shared and Dialogical Anthropology; Critical Race theory in Law and the Social Sciences and so forth. We tend to forget precursors such as the *Cubano* Roberto Fernández Retamar writing in the early 1970s.

It is not to diminish Said's immense contribution to point out that even before Said's *Orientalism*, Anouar Abdel-Malek, an Egyptian Marxist, in the early 1960s, wrote a critique of Orientalism, very much Fanonian in its voice, which was published in French<sup>8</sup>. And you have Abdul Latif Tibawi, another writer who spoke of Orientalism in a critical way. Before Postcolonial Studies emerged in the mid, late 1980s, as a term, as a rubric, that kind of thinking was called Anti-Colonial Studies or Third World Studies.

**Stam:** What postcolonialism brought was the influence of poststructuralism, whence the influence of Foucault (alongside Vico and Fanon) on Said, Derrida on Spivak, Lacan on Bhabha. The journal of which I was a part, *Jump Cut*, was part of that transition from Third-worldist Marxism toward the postcolonial trend, while still remaining more or less post-Marxist, interested in minority liberation movements, and thoroughly anti-imperialist in relation to the war in Vietnam, and American interventions in Latin America. So it is not as if we move directly from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*<sup>9</sup> in 1952 to *Orientalism* in 1978. Also, postcolonialism emerged in the context of English Studies and Comparative Literature, so 1978 marks the moment that these issues took on major importance in those fields, whereas before such work was done in History, Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, Native American Studies, Black Studies, Latino Studies and so forth.

**ES/PS:** This question dialogues with the issues you just raised and your influential "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'." The Postcolonial label remains contested, and your text is a continuous reference for this contestation and criticism. Despite the fact that postcolonial canonic authors (e.g. Bhabha and Spivak) are frequently quoted, the term "postcolonial" is often rejected. For this end your text is invoked, as well as Anne McClintock's

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<sup>8</sup> Abdel-Malek, Anouar. "L'Orientalisme en Crise." *Diogenes*. 44 (1963): 109-142. Print.

<sup>9</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967. Print. [Originally published by Editions de Seuil, France, 1952 as *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*].

**“The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’”<sup>10</sup> as they are articulated by Stuart Hall’s “When is the ‘Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit.”<sup>11</sup> Our question to both of you is then how do you re-evaluate the field, in light of the comments of Shohat’s text, twenty years later? After all you said on “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’ ” how do you see the field?**

**Shohat:** Postcolonialism was paralleled by a post-nationalism that probed some of the aporias of Third-worldist, nationalist discourse. Postcolonial, in the wake of Fanon’s “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*<sup>12</sup>, examined the blind spots of nationalism in terms of gender and ethnicity, questioning the notion that the nation is a single monolithic thing. So you have the Algerian Revolution but then the Berbers were not included, and women are not included so, that is the very positive aspect of Postcolonial Studies.

My old essay “Notes on the ‘Post-colonial’” was really about unpacking the term. Are we really “after” the colonial, when we think of Palestine or of indigenous peoples? I was making the point that the postcolonial move is a discursive rather than a historical shift, it is what comes after anti-colonial discourse, after nationalist and Third-worldist and tricontinental discourse. Nor is it only after, it is also actually critiquing those discourses. At its best, the critique exposed blind spots, at its worst it caricatured Third-worldist as dichotomous, Manichean and so forth, when we would argue that although Fanon was blind to gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, he was not Manichean. The colonial situation was Manichean but he himself was not. He also spoke of psychic “ambivalence.”

**Stam:** And on Blackness, Fanon was never essentialist. *Au contraire*. Rather, he stressed the relational, conjunctural, discursive and constantly shifting character of race. He would say “In France, the better your French, the whiter you are,” that one – and this will make a lot of sense to Brazilians in the land of “money

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<sup>10</sup> McClintock, Anne. “The Angel of Progress: Pitfall of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’”. *Social Text* 0.31/32 (1992): 84-98. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Hall, Stuart. “When was the ‘Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit”. *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Chambers, Iain and Lidia Curti, eds. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

<sup>12</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1965. Print.



whitens” and “*brancos de Bahia*” – could be black in one place and not black in another. He constantly stressed that blackness and whiteness existed in “relation.”

**Shohat:** In fact he called for “situational diagnosis.” In our different publications, we cite Fanon speaking (in a footnote for *Black Skin, White Masks*) about the reception of Tarzan films in Martinique, where the Martinicans identified with the whites against the Africans, yet discovered that in France the hostile or patronizing looks of the French white spectators made them aware of their own “to-be-looked-at-ness” in the movie theatre, realizing that they were seen as allied with the very Africans that they had seen as enemies while seeing the film in Martinique.

There was a phase at the very beginning in which anything that was seen as anti-colonial, all was binaries, essentialism. It is more complicated. Yes, some were, some were not. The other element, that we were addressing today<sup>13</sup> by talking about the Red Atlantic, is this notion that anything that you go back to search in the past is kind of a fetishistic nostalgia, or going back to the origins and thus naively essentialist. So we were questioning the unproblematic celebration of hybridity and the dismissal of any search into the precolonial past as a naïve search for a prelapsarian origin.

**Stam:** We also cited the example of *Video nas Aldeias* and the Kayapo in Brazil using cameras to record and reconstitute their so-called vanishing culture. Are these efforts essentialist? Are we supposed to reject them in the name of our postmodern sophistication? That would be obscene, even racist on the part of those who do not have to worry about the preservation or resuscitation of *their* culture.

**Shohat:** I think the critique made in my essay as well as in our *Unthinking Eurocentrism* still applies. But that does not mean that we should not use the term. That was my conclusion to the essay that I thought Stuart Hall misunderstood, in my opinion, when he tried to say that I was actually making a Third-worldist argument. I was not exactly making a Third-worldist argument; it

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<sup>13</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam. "Race in Translation. Cultural War Around the Postcolonial Atlantic." Utrecht University Postcolonial Studies Initiative - Doing Gender Lectures. Utrecht. 8 June, 2012. Lecture.

was more about the idea that we have to be precise about how to use this terminology. We cannot simply eclipse the term Third Worldism even now, if we speak about a particular era when that term was used. It is still relevant to use it to reflect a certain terminology of the time. If we speak about the postcolonial as a term, yes it too is still highly problematic because it all depends what we mean by it. Do we mean postcolonial as in post-independence? And of course then post-independence for Latin America is not exactly as for India or Iraq or Lebanon. Is colonialism over? Not really, as we know, look at what is happening over the last ten years in relation to the Middle East, etc.

**Stam:** I think an important concept is “palimpsestic temporalities” which means that the same national/transnational place/site can be simultaneously colonial, postcolonial and paracolonial. The relation to indigenous people in most of the Americas and in colonial settler states like Australia is still largely colonial, an ongoing story of dispossession. Look at the impact on indigenous people of the Belo Monte dam in the Amazon, or of similar dams in Canada and even India, where national developmentalism goes against the interests of indigenous peoples. Then you have the neocolonial dimension with the economic hegemony of the US and of the Global North, which is slowly ending with the “rise of the Rest.” Now Brazil gives money to the IMF and Angola helps Portugal! As Lula said, “*c’est tres chic!*” That kind of economic shift remolds hegemony. And then we find the “paracolonial” in phenomena that exist apart from and alongside the colonial.

The postcolonial theme of “hybridity” is often thought to have emerged historically in the post-war period of colonial karma and the migration of the formerly colonized to the metropole. But hybridity has always existed, and was only intensified by the Columbian Exchange initiated by the “voyages of discovery.” Already in 1504, the Carijó indian Essmoricq left Vera Cruz (Brazil) for France to study munitions technology in Normandy; he thus represented, *avant la lettre*, Oswald de Andrade’s *índio tecnizado* or high-tech indian. So, when you really think in a longer duration and think multi-locationally, you see these issues in a new way.

So it is all about the “excess seeing” (Bakhtin), the complementarity of perspectives whereby we mutually correct and supplement each other’s provincialisms. And here the intellectuals of the Global South are in some ways less provincial than those from the Global North, because they are obliged, to invoke [W.E.B.] DuBois, to have a double or even triple consciousness, obliged to be aware of North and South, center and periphery. They are also more likely to be multilingual.

**Shohat:** In terms of the terminology, I still believe we should use the term postcolonial in a flexible and contingent manner. It might be better to downplay the term “Postcolonial *theory*” which implies a kind of prerequisite culture capital in the form of knowledge of poststructuralism to join the postcolonial club, and speak, rather more democratically, of Postcolonial *Studies*. At this point of history, we feel comfortable using the term as a convenient designation for a particular field and especially with Post-structuralist-inflected methodologies of reading.

**Stam:** In fact, we just published an essay<sup>14</sup>, a response to essays by Robert Young and Dipesh Chakrabarty<sup>15</sup> in *New Literary History* about the state of Postcolonial Studies. In that essay, we praised the capacity of Postcolonial Studies for self-criticism and its chameleonic gift for absorbing critiques that become part of the field itself. So some critics point out the critique “you do not talk about political economy” but then people start to do it, in that sense it becomes part of the field. But we argue with any *maître à penser* model that produces a kind of star-system that obscures the work of hundreds of scholars around the world.

**Shohat:** And that affects how we think about the position of Brazilian intellectuals. Because even if some of this work has not been produced under the rubric of Postcolonial Studies, it is still, of course, very relevant to the field. It could be talked about and recuperated within that framework called

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<sup>14</sup> Stam, Robert and Ella Shohat. “Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?.” *New Literary History* 43.2 (2012): 371-390. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change.” *New Literary History* 43.1 (2012): 1-18. Print.

Young, Robert. “Postcolonial Remains.” *New Literary History* 43.1 (2012): 19-42. Print.

Postcolonial Studies. So it is not about inventing the wheel, it is not about going back to zero, as if there were no Brazilian antecedents for such work – think of Mário de Andrade, or Oswald de Andrade, or Abdias do Nascimento and Roberto Schwarz and countless others. If we think from the Global South, we think in a polyperspectival way, where the center is displaced to form multiple centers – whence “polycentrism” – and with a stress on multiple diasporas and transcultural connectivities. So we really believe in intellectual plurilogue and decentered interlocution across borders.

**Stam:** And that also means that Postcolonial Studies must be multilingual. So one of the points in our book is “let’s talk about the work in Portuguese and French” and not just English as is too often the case in Postcolonial Studies and Cultural Studies. We have long sections on the debates about race and coloniality in Brazil, the debate on affirmative action, and a long section on *Tropicália*.

Whatever the positions of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil on local politics, their work in songs like “A Mão de Limpeza”, “Manhatã”, and “Haiti”<sup>16</sup> is absolutely cosmopolitan and brilliant. And you can dance to it! It would be hard to say what I value more – one of the books by a *maître à penser* or those songs, which forge ideas, but do it musically, lyrically, performatively. As Caetano says in “Língua,”<sup>17</sup> in an allusion to Heidegger, “some say that one can only philosophize in German, but if you have a brilliant idea, put it in a song”! “Haiti” says so much about the Black Atlantic, class and race and what Stuart Hall said about race as the modality within which class is lived. “Manhatã,” similarly, addresses what we call the Red Atlantic by placing *cunhã* – Tupi for “young woman” – in a canoe in the Hudson. It connects indigenous Brazil to indigenous North America, in a brilliant transoceanic gesture. When I play the song for my students (as we did here in Utrecht) I superimpose digital images of *Manabatta* – the indigenous name, as Caetano notes in *Verdade Tropical*, for Manhattan.

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<sup>16</sup> Gil, Gilberto. “Mão de Limpeza.” *Raça Humana*. WEA, 1984. LP.

Veloso, Caetano. “Manhatã.” *Livro*. Universal, 1997. CD.

Gil, Gilberto and Caetano Veloso. “Haiti.” *Tropicália 2*. Universal, 1993. CD.

<sup>17</sup> Veloso, Caetano. “Língua.” *Noites do Norte*. Universal, 2001. CD.

**ES/PS: You have been discussing the traveling of theories. Given to the new position of hegemony that Brazil is gaining internationally, do you expect or hope for changes in the dynamics of the system of production and reception of theory?**

**Stam:** I think it is partly happening just through economics. The so-called “rise of the Rest” means that Brazil... Mário de Andrade talked about that. He said “Our literature is great but no one knows it because to have a great literature is easier if you also have a great currency, if you have a great army.” So, partly economics affects that, while the US is clearly in decline, as is Europe in the age of the crisis of the Euro. This is clearly, finally, to touch on a note of subaltern nationalism, Brazil’s moment.

**Shohat:** Of course English still remains the dominant lingua franca in academic exchanges around the world. That is a residue of colonialism and something not so easy to change.

**Stam:** At the same time, even that slowly changes, for instance, LASA, i.e. Latin American Studies Association, and BRASA (Brazilian Studies Association) are by now almost completely bilingual. Participants go easily back and forth between Spanish and English or Portuguese and English, which used not to be the case.

**ES/PS: How do you see Brazil’s current position vis-à-vis South America and Africa within what you termed “cultural wars”?**

**Shohat:** Maybe I can start to answer the question by speaking of African Americans and the Afro-diaspora. Our project began with the response of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant to a book (*Orpheus and Power*<sup>18</sup>) by Michael Hanchard, an African American political scientist who studied the Black Power movement in Brazil. In two reviews,<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu and Wacquant attacked the book

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<sup>18</sup> Hanchard, Michael George. *Orpheus and Power: The “Movimento Negro” of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc Wacquant, “On the Cunning of Imperial Reason,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16, no. 1 (1999) 51. Print. And Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc Wacquant, “La Nouvelle Vulgate Planétaire,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*. May 2000. 6-7. Print.

as a case of North American exportation of “ethnocentric poison” into a Brazilian society completely free of racism.

**Stam:** Needless to say, this was a very one-sided, provincial and uninformed interpretation that returned to the idealizing nostrums of Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s. In Brazil, a special issue of *Revista Afro-Asiática*<sup>20</sup> was dedicated to the Bourdieu/Wacquant critique of Hanchard’s book, which we summarize in our book. They generally lamented the lack of cultural knowledge of Brazil behind the attacks and noted that although Bourdieu/Wacquant denounce North American scholarship as ethnocentric, they cite, in their refutation of Hanchard’s book, only North American scholars, hardly acknowledging the long tradition of Brazilian scholarship on these issues.

**Shohat:** Bourdieu/Wacquant implied that the critique of racism in Brazil could only come from outside Brazil, when our bookshelves contained countless Brazilian books on racism and discrimination by authors like Abdias do Nascimento (*Genocídio do Negro Brasileiro*<sup>21</sup>), Lélia Gonzales, Clóvis Moura, Sérgio Costa, Antonio Guimarães, Nei Lopes, and countless others.

**Stam:** So, it becomes an issue of covertly nationalist white narcissism that projects racism onto a single site, forgetting slavery and conquest existed all around the Black Atlantic and that as a consequence racism and discrimination too can be found all around the Black Atlantic.

**Shohat:** We speak in our new book of “intercolonial narcissism,” the idea that all the colonial powers, and too often their intellectuals, want to see their colonialism, or their slavery, or their discrimination, as better than that of the others.

**Stam:** So the American form of narcissism is to say: “we are not colonialists” like the others. Apart from the obvious colonialism of conquering the indigenous west of the country, apart from the “imperial binge” of the 1890s, the US practices and imperialism of military bases, it can invade country after country and always say: “We do not want one inch of Korean land, Vietnamese

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<sup>20</sup> Special issue on “On the Cunning of Imperial Reason” essay, *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* January-April 2002. Print.

<sup>21</sup> Nascimento, Abdias do. *O genocídio do negro Brasileiro: Processo de um Racismo Mascarado*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978. Print.

land, Laotian land, Cambodian land, Grenadian land, Iraqi land, Afghan land, etc..” But it keeps invading and maintaining bases. So that is the US exceptionalist narcissism. And then you have the French “*mission civilisatrice*” narcissism – “we only care about culture and education” – the British “its just about free trade” narcissism, and then the Luso-Tropicalist Portuguese “we are all mixed and love *mulatas*” narcissism, so every country has its exceptionalism.

We make the point that the intellectuals of empowered countries love “other people’s victims,” thus the Germans historically adored indians (Native Americans) but were not so fond of the Jews. So they would supposedly never have dispossessed the Native Americans, but they killed the Herero in Africa, exterminating them in 1904. The French loved American blacks but not Algerian Arabs. Everybody feels good by thinking so. This is very much a white debate: “we are less racist than those other racists.”

**Shohat:** It is in this sense that we question Ali Kamel’s pop book *Não Somos Racistas*.<sup>22</sup> He is a “Global,” i.e. literally one of the important figures at Globo and a Syrian immigrant. It’s a superficial, journalistic book but its thesis is ultimately the same as that of Bourdieu/Wacquant. And then, of course, the resistance to multiculturalism and postcolonialism was connected to the idea that it only applies to places where you have race issues, and therefore it applies to the US, but it cannot be applicable to France or to Brazil.

**ES/PS: On the topic of *other people’s others* and blindness to racism, do you find the association between the representation of the Jew and the representation of the black a fruitful way to decolonize Eurocentric bodies of theory?**

**Shohat:** Definitely, it is key and it is one of the discussions in our new book. We already brought up that issue in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* and bring it up again in *Race in Translation*. In both books, we lament the segregation of the Jewish question from the colonial race question. For us it always has been important to connect the Jew, the Muslim, the diasporic black/African, to these debates. All of the issues can be traced back to the various 1492s – the Inquisition, the

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<sup>22</sup> Ali Kamel, *Não Somos Racistas: Uma Reação aos que querem nos Transformar numa Nação Bicolor*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova fronteira, 2006. Print.

expulsion of the Moors, the “discovery” i.e. the conquest of the Americas, and the beginnings of TransAtlantic slavery, first of indians and then of Africans. All those issues were related then, and they are still related now. In terms of Jews and blacks – and of course it is not a simple opposition since many Jews are black – Yemins, Ethiopians, converts etc. – and many blacks are Jews. It is not an accident that the activist movement about Arab Jews in Israel called themselves the Black Panthers. But this discussion goes way back. Just in the post-war period, Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* begins to think about the racialization of the black vis-à-vis that of the Jew. In *Race in Translation*, we have a discussion of his comparative study of the Jew and the black, and in *Taboo Memories*<sup>23</sup> an essay focuses on that issue in detail. But in our most recent book, we link the Jewish question to the Muslim/Arab question, because Fanon also speaks about the Arab, and he did not idealize any group. He says: “The Arab is racist toward the black, the Jew is racist toward the black.” He noted that in France it was easier to be black than Arab, and cites instances where police would harass him and then apologize when they discovered that he was not an Arab but a West Indian. What complicates the relation, as we saw yesterday in *Forget Baghdad*,<sup>24</sup> is the whole question of Israel, Zionism as a project in whitening and Europeanizing the Jew. We see it in the history of Zionist cinema and later in Israeli cinema, where the casting often favors blond and blue-eyed actors, the muscular Jew, culminating in *Exodus*<sup>25</sup>, where you have Paul Newman being cast as the new kind of Jew, the polar opposite of the diaspora, *shtetl*, ghetto, victimized Jew. In a sense, Jews internalized anti-Semitic discourses.

**ES/PS: Is this the problem of the nation getting into what could be a potentially liberating field of the postcolonial?**

**Shohat:** Although one could argue that most nation-states are anomalous, Israel is perhaps more anomalous than others. It is a mixed formation, on the one hand it represents a nationalist project – and thus analogous to Third World and minority struggles – but from the Palestinian point of view, it is also a colonial

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<sup>23</sup> Shohat, Ella. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. Next Wave. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print

<sup>24</sup> Shohat, Ella. "Postcolonial Cinema Studies Conference Session: Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs - the Iraqi Connection (Dir. Samir, 2003)." Organised by Sandra Ponzanesi Utrecht University, in collaboration with Postcolonial Studies Initiative, Centre for the Humanities, Culture & Identities and the Gender Studies Programme. Utrecht. 7 June, 2012. Film screening.

<sup>25</sup> *Exodus*. Dir. Preminger, Otto. United Artists; MGM, 1960, Film.



settler project, which is why Palestinians see themselves as indigenous, comparable to native Americans, a point made in Godard's film *Notre Musique*<sup>26</sup>, which makes this analogy directly. Indeed, the film links the various issues – anti-Semitism, native Americans, Jews, Palestinians etc. by having native American characters articulate the analogy. It is also set in Sarajevo, a multicultural partially Muslim and distantly Jewish society under siege by nationalist orthodox Serbs. (There is even a story about Muslims in Bosnia protecting the Torah even after the Jews had left.) Palestinians in the film cite the poem *The Red Indian*<sup>27</sup> by Mahmoud Darwish.

**Stam:** At the same time, Native Americans identify with Jews as being the victims of the Holocaust. Some native Americans such as Ward Churchill, who wrote a blurb for our book, claimed provocatively that “Columbus was our Hitler,” at which point Churchill was attacked by Jewish organizations in the US: “How could he compare Hitler to Columbus,... there was no genocide... it was unintentional, they just caught diseases” etc.. But in fact there was a megagenocide, some caused by disease but also by the massacres already reported by [Bartolomé] de las Casas in the XVI century and continuing up through the XX century (e.g. in Guatemala and Salvador).

**Shohat:** Churchill was also accused, as were many writers like Edward Said, of “narrative envy” toward the Jewish victimization narrative.

**Stam:** And in France this debate has been very lively, involving many writers of diverse backgrounds, and taking a wide range of positions. You have Jewish thinkers like Alain Finkielkraut associated vaguely with the sixties Left who subsequently became anti-black, anti-Third World, anti-Palestinian. On the other hand, you have very progressive Jewish thinkers such as Edgar Morin and Esther Benbassa who say: “No, we have been symbiotically connected to Muslims historically.” We note what we call the “rightward turn” of many Zionist Jews in the US and France and in many other countries. It is noteworthy

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<sup>26</sup> *Notre Musique*. Dir. Godard, Jean-Luc. Wild Bunch, 2004. Film.

<sup>27</sup> Darwish, Mahmoud. "The Speech of the Red Indian." Trans. Sargon Boulous. *The Adam of Two Edens: Poems*. Eds. Munir Akash and Daniel Moore. Syracuse NY: Syracuse UP, 2000. 129-45. Print.

that Claude Lanzmann, the author of *Shoah*<sup>28</sup> but also of militantly pro-Israeli documentaries, was not always so ardently Zionist or anti-Palestinian.

On October 17, 1961, when the French police – following the orders of Police Chief Maurice Papon – and here again we see the link between anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic attitudes – the same man who sent Jews to the death camps, when the police murdered two hundred or more Algerians in the streets of Paris, Claude Lanzmann wrote a public statement saying: “We as members of the Jewish community understand what you are going through. We know what it means to be harassed and murdered on the basis of your identity. We know what it means.” So at that time, you had solidarity. It is only after 1967 that you find radical, generalized Jewish-Arab polarization (and of course some Jews are Arabs).

Fanon, similarly, had warned his fellow blacks “when people are speaking of Jews, they are talking about you.” You know, “You are next” or, “It is the same process”. In the realm of scholarship, meanwhile, the first work on racism in Europe and in the US, for example, was about anti-Semitism. “The Holocaust took place, *what led to it?*” Thus you get analyses of the “authoritarian personality” and so forth. It is only later that the discussion moves to race.

**Shohat:** The black-Jewish alliance became largely undone in the wake of the Israeli victory and in the US in the wake of struggles over the autonomy of schools, Palestine and other issues. With Jean Paul Sartre writing in France about the anti-Semite and the Jew<sup>29</sup> but later also publishes in *L'Express* “*Une Victoire*”<sup>30</sup>, which is about Henri Alleg, a Jewish communist who joined the Algerian anti-colonial struggle against the French and became a prisoner, and was tortured, leading to his censored book about torture called *La Question*.<sup>31</sup> Sartre, who had also written the introduction to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* saw the issue of torture as part of the same continuum of struggle. But this changed after 1967, as Josi, Fanon’s wife who still lived in Algeria,

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<sup>28</sup> *Shoah*. Dir. Lanzmann, Claude. New Yorker Films, 1985. Film. 9 ½ hours documentary on the Holocaust.

<sup>29</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Trans. George Joseph Becker. [New York]: Schocken Books, 1948. Print.

<sup>30</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Une Victoire.” *Situations V: Colonialisme Et Néo-Colonialisme*. 1958 [L'Express]. Paris: Gallimard, 1978. Print.

<sup>31</sup> *The Question* was first published in the UK. Soon after Sartre’s “*Une Victoire*” a new edition was published in French by Les Éditions de Minuit.

explained, she did not want Jean Paul Sartre's introduction to be included in the new edition of *The Wretched of the Earth* because he took a pro-Israel position and thus showed that he supported colonialism. Jean Genet, in contrast, supported not only the Black Panthers in the US but also the Palestinians.

1967 marks a division, where some Jews made what we call a "rightward turn," splitting off from the Third-worldist (later multicultural) coalition, struggle, even though many Jews continued to be allied with Third-worldist and minoritarian struggles. But in the early 1980s, in the wake of the "Zionism is Racism" proclamation in the UN<sup>32</sup> many Left Jews began to move to the Right because they associated Third Worldism and later multiculturalism with "anti-Israel" and even anti-Semitic positions.

**ES/PS: Further within geopolitics, and back to Brazil, how do you see the country's position towards other (formally) subaltern regions, as it emerges as a potentially hegemonic power? For example, Brazil has been investing in African countries and gearing its attention to the African countries that have Portuguese as their official language through the CPLP<sup>33</sup>.**

**Shohat:** Well, certainly Brazil, as a huge country and the world's sixth economy, has a legitimate desire to be recognized as a global power. That was already clear with Brazil's desire to be a member of the Security Council in the UN. The very fact that Sérgio de Mello<sup>34</sup> was selected as the Brazilian representative to Iraq – with tragic consequences – he also represented something very positive for Iraq. But Brazil has at times played an ambiguous convoluted role in the Middle East, as when it sold, not unlike the US, airplanes to Iraq during the Saddam Hussein era. Hussein was a fascist dictator, not so different from the Brazil of the *junta*. Being completely opposed to the American invasion does not prevent me, as an Iraqi-Arab Jew from denouncing Hussein as a dictator. But overall, we think that Brazil, unlike the perpetually warring arms-selling US, has been a pacifying force in the world.

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<sup>32</sup> On November 10, 1975 the United Nations General Assembly adopted its Resolution 3379, which states as its conclusion: "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination". After years of US and Israeli pressure, on December 16, 1991 the UN General Assembly revoked Resolution 3379.

<sup>33</sup> *Comunidade dos Países Africanos de Língua Portuguesa*.

<sup>34</sup> Brazilian employee of the United Nations killed during an attack to Canal Hotel in Bagdad in 2003.

**Stam:** We also have the question, of course, of Blackness and black identity vis-à-vis Africa and the Afro-diaspora. On the one hand, you have the Brazilian economic outreach to Africa. You also find more and more African students coming from Angola and Mozambique to Brazilian universities, a phenomenon we also find in the US with what are called the neo-Africans from Senegal, Nigeria, Kenya and so forth. In both Brazil and the US, you have the problem of Eurocentric educational systems that tend to treat Africa, when they don't ignore it completely, as a victim continent, a slaves' continent, without any autonomous history. These ideas have been challenged by many scholars in both countries, for example people like [Luiz Felipe de] Alencastro who studies the South Atlantic in such a way as to emphasize African agency.

ES: Recently, affirmative-action policies have been gaining ground in Brazil, in a way, to come to terms with the subaltern state of African descendants; but there is no real public recollection towards the violence deployed against black individuals during and after colonization.

**Shohat:** The question is: within which kind of metanarrative? Is it about the narrative of bringing modernity to Africa? Is it the same kind of rescue trope narrative? Is Brazil now to be seen as almost the Western country vis-à-vis “backward” Africa? Lula's surprised reaction to African modernity – “*nem parece África!*”<sup>35</sup> is in this sense symptomatic. Apart from *candomblé* and capoeira and the *Afro-blocos* – which are also very important – how does Africa figure in contemporary Brazilian political discourse? These would be crucial questions for our kind of thinking.

**Stam:** One of the points of our new book is transnational interconnectedness in terms of the exchange of ideas. For example, Brazil and the US have been connected from the beginning. The word “negro” in English comes from Portuguese. Some of the first blacks in Manhattan were “Afro-Brazilians” of Bantu background, whose names – Simon Congo, Paulo d'Angola – betray their origins. The Dutch, in their fight against the Native Americans and the British, decided to have some blacks with them from the Portuguese areas and give them freedom and land in exchange for them fighting against the British. For example

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<sup>35</sup> Lula notoriously declared, upon his arrival in Windhoek in 2003, that the capital was so clean, beautiful and its people so extraordinary, it did not even feel he was in an African country.

the land on which exists SOBs (Sounds of Brazil), the nightclub where Brazilian musicians like Gilberto Gil, Martinho da Vila, and Djavan often play, belonged, in a remarkable continuity, to Simon Congo.

**Shohat:** The New York/Brazil [connection] also involves the Jews from Recife who came to then New Amsterdam with the Dutch to found the first synagogue in New York. We often forget that the Inquisition continued in the Americas, including in Brazil. A [Luso-]Brazilian film, called *O Judeu*<sup>36</sup>, by Jom Tob Azulay [treats this link]. So the Dutch did not have Inquisition, and in fact, a lot of Portuguese Jews came here [to the Netherlands] Spinoza, etc.. So in the North of Brazil with Pernambuco, the Dutch domination was a haven for a lot of persecuted Jews and when New Amsterdam was happening and as the Dutch were retreating from Pernambuco, they kept to New Amsterdam that is New York, which is why the first synagogue in New York is a Portuguese synagogue: because of the Jews that came from Pernambuco.

**Stam:** And that synagogue was the first place in what is now the US to teach the Portuguese language. There is another expression in English, by the way, that is “pickaninny” to refer to a little black child, which comes from Portuguese *pequininho*. So through language you see a certain cultural interconnectedness, despite myths of separateness.

**Shohat:** That is why translation was also a key issue for us. Not just literal translation but also as a trope to evoke all the fluidities and transformations and indigenizations that occur when ideas “*fora de lugar*”<sup>37</sup> cross borders and travel from one place to another. In intellectual life also, *navegar é preciso*.

**ES/PS: Race, however, is not usually an issue, a question in Cultural Translation Studies, which became an important field of scholarship. Is this absence the reason why you chose the title Race in Translation to your new book? Is it a provocation?**

**Stam:** Not really. We tried so many titles so it is almost an accident that race ended up so foregrounded.

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<sup>36</sup> *O Judeu*. Dir. Azulay, Jom Tob. Tatu Filmes, Metrofilme Actividades Cinematográficas, A&B Produções, 1996. Film.

<sup>37</sup> Schwartz, Roberto. ‘Idéias fora do lugar,’ *Estudos Cebrap*, 3 (1973). Print.

**Shohat:** We actually had *Cultural Wars in Translation* originally but the publisher did not like it, finding it too heavy, so we ended up with *Race in Translation*. Actually race has been a common theme in Cultural Studies – including in figures like Stuart Hall – usually as part of the “mantra” (class, race, gender, sexuality etc.). In the field of Postcultural Studies, you find race as a theme via the references to Fanon, but it is sometimes downplayed as being too tied to “identity politics” supposedly deconstructed by poststructuralist theory. Postcolonial Studies, in our view, is sometimes rather patronizing toward the various forms of Ethnic Studies and Area Studies (Native American Studies, Afro-diasporic Studies, Latino Studies, Latin American Studies, Pacific Studies, Asian Studies etc.), ignoring their contribution, including in the ways that Ethnic Studies opened up the academe for Postcolonial Studies to have such an important space.

**Stam:** Postcolonialism sometimes presents itself as theoretically sophisticated, while Ethnic Studies is unfairly presented as lacking in theoretical aura and prestige. African American writing is also theoretical; it is not as if it is only one side that is theoretical. In the US, these issues also get caught up in the tensions between immigrants, including African immigrants, who do very well, while African Americans still remain oppressed and marginalized, even despite Obama’s victory. You have immigrants from India, who are very prosperous and sometimes quite conservative, and then you have black Americans who have been in the US for centuries and are not doing so well. One even finds tensions between African Americans and Africans, and between US born blacks and Caribbean blacks, because Caribbeans are sometimes portrayed as “the good minority” like Asians. (One finds these same divides in France)...

And then, people do not know this but, the most educated immigrants in the US are Africans. Which is a shame for Africa, it is the brain drain, but a boon to the US. But all these, including Francophone intellectuals do not get jobs in France. So, they go to Canada and to the US and to the UK, but not to France, partially because France, despite the key role of Francophone writers in all these movements, besides having a relatively closed academic system, was refractory to Cultural Studies, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Studies. But we also point out that there has been a huge explosion of writing on these issues during

the XXI century, especially after the 2005 *banlieue* rebellions. Now we find Black Studies *à la Française* in the form of Pap Ndiaye's *La Condition Noire*<sup>38</sup>.

**Shohat:** But the resistance to Postcolonial and Multicultural Studies sometimes come from leftist Leninist radicals like [Slavoj] Žižek, who attacks multiculturalism and identity politics in a very uninformed way. (He obviously hasn't read the kind of work we talk about). One has to wonder why the Right (Bush, Cheney, Cameron, Sarkozy, Merkel) and some leftists all oppose identity politics today, although not, obviously, from the same angle.

**Stam:** And in some ways it has to do with class-over-race and economics-over-culture arguments. Because "the real struggle is with global capitalism," let us not be distracted by feminist issues, police harassment, marginalized black people, Latinos in the US, the descendants of Arab/Muslims in France, blacks and indigenous people in Brazil, etc..

**Shohat:** An issue where Postcolonial Studies is very valuable is in the critique of the assumptions undergirding Area Studies, which unlike Cultural Studies had a very top-down origin in US foreign policy, and which often separates Latin America (over there) and Latinos (back here), the Middle East (over there) and the Middle Easterners (spread throughout the Americas, including in Brazil where it is often said that there are more Lebanese than in Lebanon itself). An anthology I co-edited, due out soon, treats this topic. So what we are arguing for is to bring those things together, because Area Studies problematically segregates this global flow of people, of ideas, of cultures; if it does not look at diasporic back and forth movements.

**Stam:** We find a similar kind of Eurocentric segregation in how history is recounted. Most of the books about revolution and the "age of revolution," never talk about Haiti, which was the most radical of the revolutions, because it was national, social, anti-slavery, etc.. And we remind our readers that the first "postcolony" and "neo-colony" was newly independent Haiti. In 1804 France punished them for defeating the French army, by giving them huge debts. So the

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<sup>38</sup> Ndiaye, Pap. *La Condition Noire*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008. Print.

IMF of its time was France. Later, the US invaded Haiti, and France and the US collaborated in deposing Aristide. And that is why Haiti is so poor.

**PS: Latin Americans and Caribbeans, despite excitement over concepts, often express ambivalence about Postcolonial Studies and theory. Where is Latin America in the discussion?**

**Stam:** Yes, it should not be seen as “The postcolonials are over there and we attack them”. No, we are part of that and that is part of us and we advance it, but, I think a lot of Latin Americans have this reserve: “And what about Latin America?” But in a sense we should just do our work, and not just complain about Postcolonial Studies not doing it. We are part of Postcolonial Studies, after all.

**ES/PS: In your chapter in *Europe in Black and White*<sup>39</sup> you have warned against the “master narratives of comparison” in Postcolonial criticism, which impose travel routes “within rigidly imagined cultural geographies.” In your opinion, which ideas, concepts and theories are not traveling enough?**

**Shohat:** I think this whole question of making links, the method of making links and what we emphasize as linked analogies are missing for us in certain geographies of traveling theory. We have always been against a certain kind of isolationist and nation-state based approach, much more in favor of a broad, multidirectional, more relational approach.

**Stam:** But in our recent book we were limited to what we knew—which is France, Brazil, and the US (and for Ella, the Middle East, although I know a bit about that from having lived in North Africa and now in Abu Dhabi). One could argue for South-South Studies, for example embracing India and Brazil as multi-ethnic, multi-religious countries from the Global South. It always occurs to us that Brazilian theories of film would be highly relevant to Indian cinema. In India you have this binarism, for the intellectuals, of “the bad Bollywood” and “the good art film,” while Brazilians were questioning this hierarchy already

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<sup>39</sup> Stam, Robert, and Ella Shohat. "The Culture Wars in Translation." *Europe in Black and White: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Immigration, Race and Identity in the "Old Continent"*. Eds. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, et al. Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2011. 17-35. Print.



in the 1970s by looking positively at the *Chanchadas*. *Tropicália*, Carmen Miranda, da-da... So I think a lot of places could learn from Brazil, which is why people argue that Brazil was post-modern *avant la lettre*. *Tropicália* was questioning high and low culture, incorporating global mass-media culture, promoting syncretisms. In terms of syncretism, you look at a 1928 novel, *Macunaíma*,<sup>40</sup> who was himself racially multiple, and who created a character “*sem nenhum caráter*.” The character constantly mutates like a chameleon. If that is not postcolonial hybridity, I don’t know what it is.

**Shohat:** The problem is that this type of knowledge and analysis tends to be limited to Brazilian Studies, when it is relevant to the whole world. So it’s Brazil, and Brazilian culture and Cultural Studies, that is not traveling enough. Every country has rebelled against colonialism, produced its quantum of thought and art, including the Arab world, Asia, and the indigenous world.

**Stam:** Every country should be part of the postcolonial debate. Now its time for countries like Brazil to be the source of ideas *fora de lugar*! So, even though Brazil is emerging as a kind of global economic power, it remains peripheralized as a cultural/philosophical power when it is still too often seen as *irrelevant* to Postcolonial Studies and Cultural Studies.

**Shohat:** So, for us it is not only about multiplying geographies but also about multiplying the rubrics and theories and grids in order to see the relationalities and linked analogies. You can take any place on the planet; to speak of Vietnam is to speak of French and American imperialism, to see it as existing in relation to Senegal and Tunisia as fellow French colonies, or in relation to France and the US as colonial/imperial powers. But it does not have to pass via a center, which is why we argued early on in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* for polycentrism and multiperspectivalism with a cyber-like openness of points of entry and departure, while also recognizing geopolitical asymmetries and uneven-ness.

**Stam:** Part of the point of our new book is to defend Brazilian intellectuals, suggesting that Roberto Schwarz, Ismail Xavier, Haroldo de Campos, Sérgio Costa, Abdias do Nascimento are just as interesting as Fredric Jameson or

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<sup>40</sup> Andrade, Mário de. *Macunaíma, O Herói Sem Nenhum Caráter*. São Paulo: Oficinas Gráficas de Eugenio Cupolo, 1928. Print

Pierre Bourdieu. It is not a hierarchy. They should all be translated. So we talk about the fact that Brazilian intellectuals tend to know the French and the Americans, but how many French and Americans know the Brazilian writers?

Brazilian popular culture is a different case, but it too should be better known, since Brazilian music, for example, is so amazingly erudite and sophisticated, and popular, at the very same time. Caetano Veloso, for instance, dialogues with Roberto Schwarz' essay on Tropicália by answering: "*Brasil é absurdo mas não é surdo.*"<sup>41</sup> How many places in the world have popular musicians who talk about Heidegger in their songs, or write a lyrical history of a film movement, as Caetano does in "Cinema Novo"<sup>42</sup> or literary intellectuals like Zé Miguel Wisnik who compose erudite sambas and play Scott Joplin compositions backwards! To us, music and art can often say as much as academic writing.

**ES/PS: The Atlantic is a recurrent trope in the common analogies and frequent routes taken in the traveling of ideas. Do you consider the Atlantic, as much as *Lusofonia* for instance, one such a master narrative of comparison that dominates the Postcolonial field? Is it possible to appropriate them and use them productively or should we aim to get rid of them in due course?**

**Shohat:** Perhaps *Lusofonia* has been visible in Postcolonial Studies because of the question of the Black Atlantic and slavery but in fact, if we think of the "Lusophone world", then we will have to connect it to India, Goa, the Indian Ocean, Macao, even the remnants of Portuguese settlements in what is today Abu Dhabi, those areas, the Gulf Area.

**Stam:** In the new book, we note the explosion of aquatic metaphors to speak of these issues – Black Atlantic (we speak of a Red Atlantic), circum-Atlantic performance (Roach), tidalectics (Kamau Brathwaite), liquid modernity (Bauman) – as a way to find a more fluid language that goes beyond the rigidities of nation-state borders. It's not a matter of "getting rid of" but of expanding to see the currents of the Atlantic feeding into the Pacific.

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<sup>41</sup> Veloso, Caetano. "Love, Love, Love." *Muito (Dentro da Estrela Azulada)*. Universal, 2007. CD.

<sup>42</sup> Veloso, Caetano. "Cinema Novo." *Tropicália 2*. WEA, 1993. LP.

**Shohat:** You have Pacific Studies, you have Indian Ocean Studies, you have Mediterranean Studies, and even Delta Studies, and Island Studies. A recent paper stressed Obama as an islander – Hawai, Indonesia, Manhattan! It is also a question of modesty. We cannot know everything – the Black and Red and White Atlantics are already huge subjects. So it is more about connecting other currents. Françoise Vergès, who was born in Reunion, but went to Algeria to join the Revolution and subsequently studied in the US and France, but teaches in England – thus incarnating this transnational approach -- always makes this point that slavery penetrated Reunion; colonialism was everywhere so, wherever travelers traveled and left their marks. Actually what is useful here is James Clifford’s metaphor of routes. Routes are also oceanic of course, so they are important. But this is not to substitute land. It is not an either-or question; it is a matter of focus and openness to new knowledges, languages, and grids.

**ES/PS:** You spoke of the “Red Atlantic,” and about the traveling of indigenous epistemologies between Europe and the indigenous Americas. Could you elaborate?

**Stam:** Yes, we point out that there have been five centuries of philosophical/literary/anthropological interlocution between French writers and Brazilian indians, between French protestants like Jean de Léry, between three Tupinambá in France and Montaigne, all the way up to Lévi-Strauss – who worked with the Nambiquara – and Pierre Clastres (“Society against the State”<sup>43</sup>) and René Girard (who talks about Tupinambá cannibalism), and reversing the current, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who sees the Amazonian indians through a Deleuzian grid. We start to find a more equal dialogue between western intellectuals and native thinkers. For example, Sandy Grande is a Quechua from Peru who teaches in an American University. She wrote a book called *Red Pedagogy*<sup>44</sup>, which is a critical dialogue with the most radical Marxist, feminist, revolutionary, multicultural advocates of a Freire-style radical pedagogy, but she speaks as an equal and even a critic who says they have a lot to learn from indigenous peoples. Native intellectuals and media-makers circulate

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<sup>43</sup> Clastres, Pierre. *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. Trans. Robert Hurley and Abe Stein. New York: Zone Books, 1987. Print.

<sup>44</sup> Grande, Sandy. *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. Print.

internationally. Kayapo filmmakers – who could not travel with passports until the 1988 Brazilian constitution – meet aboriginal Australian and indigenous Alaskan filmmakers in festivals in New York and Toronto. Davi Yanomami relates the massacre of the Yanomami outside of Brazil. Raoni and Sting meet with François Mitterrand in the 1980s. Already in the XVI century, Paraguaçu met French royalty. In the XVII century, Pocahontas met British royalty and playwrights like Ben Jonson. We forget that, in the early centuries of contact, Native leaders like Cunhambebe (portrayed in *Como Era Gostoso meu Francês*<sup>45</sup>) were received as royalty by the French. We forget that the Tupinamba went to Rouen to perform before King Henry II and Catherine de Medici, a fact that was celebrated by a samba school in the 1990s. We have an Aymara president in Bolivia, Evo Morales, who has appeared – to wild applause – on the Jon Stewart Daily Show. Some Andean countries have inscribed in their constitutions “the right of nature not to be harmed.”

So without being euphoric, as we know things are not going exactly well for indigenous peoples, there are nevertheless *very important counter-currents*.

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<sup>45</sup> *Como Era Gostoso meu Francês*. Dir. Nelson Pereira dos Santos. Regina Films, New York Films, 1971. Film.